

[00:00:05 - 00:00:28]

Zachary Schrag: Okay. Zachary Schrag is interviewing Ellen Bozman. It is Monday, January 12th, 2004 and it's a little past, or just before 15 in the afternoon. And we are in the offices of the Arlington Community Foundation in Arlington, Virginia. So, first I just like to get a little background on you. Where were you born? Where did you grow up? Go to school, that kind of thing.

[00:00:28 - 00:02:03]

Ellen Bozman: I was born in Springfield, Illinois. Went to Northwestern University. Uh, graduated with a major in, uh, political science, public administration specifically. Then right after college I came to Washington. I was an intern with the National Institute of Public Affairs [NIPA] this is an organization no longer existing, uh, but for about 13 years they ran an internship in government designed for college graduates or, um, graduate degree graduates.

We spent nine months, the academic year working in the Federal Government with what would now be called a mentor. It wasn't called that then and it gave us a wonderful introduction to Government. We accompanied our mentor on most of his, uh, duties so that we got a view of the Government and Government policy, which we would not have gotten had we just started at an entry-level job. The NIPA was supported by the Rockefeller Brothers Foundation and it had always been their hope that the government would take over this program, which did happen with the beginning of a federally-run internship program.

Uh, not as much flexibility as we had, uh, but nonetheless, um, uh, a good successor in NIPA.

Zachary Schrag: So who was your mentor?

[00:02:03 - 00:02:30]

Ellen Bozman: I was with the Les Roach in the VA department, then I went to the Budget bureau, now OMB, and worked in the division of the Budget Bureau which did hospital analysis. So I saw it from a different angle. Then later went to work for the Bureau of the Budget, but not in the hospital section.

[00:02:31 - 00:02:32]

Zachary Schrag: So which section in there?

[00:02:32 - 00:03:15]

Ellen Bozman: I was in, first in Personnel and then I was-I stayed just a few years. I ended as the Acting Budget Officer for the Bureau itself, which was fun.

Zachary Schrag: And then you had a longer career in the Federal Government or not?

Ellen Bozman: No, I had a-that was my short career, okay, My basically five-year career in the Federal Government. Then I-

Zachary Schrag: WHAT years was that?

Ellen Bozman; '47 to '52. Then I left when we started having a family. I did volunteer work in the community for a number of years and didn't, hold another pain job until I went on the Arlington County Board.

[00:03:16 - 00:03:34]

Zachary Schrag: And just for the record, I have some documents that refer to Mrs Williams Bozman, that's when you were using them. So you leave the Federal Government, but then when do you get involved in politics and the league of women voters here in our office?

Ellen Bozman: Immediately, Okay, but not politics at that point. League women voters, yes. I knew that I quit because I was going to have our first child in a few months, but I was also smart enough to know that I needed some other activity than raising this child and joined the League of Women Voters and enjoyed it very much. And it was a wonderful introduction of the community. Uh, it had a lot of people, a lot of women who, um, who used to say people get interested in the league first at the national level and then they begin to learn about the state and local levels. And I think it's true, because the national issues are the ones you know about and think about, read about state and local issues. Not so much until you have a reason to become involved at the local level. So, um, we have just a couple of days ago had a death with Elizabeth Campbell, who's at 101, died. She was the founder of our public TV station, WETA. Also, she and her husband had been very active during the integration days in Arlington and that has gotten us rethinking about that period.

[00:03:34 - 00:05:35]

League was active in that period, um, in trying to push the locality in the state toward integration and doing, I guess, backup job is what I would say. We were not the individuals who were-it was some Black citizens of Arlington, assisted by Black citizens all over the country who were, who were the leaders in this. But we were sort of in the background trying to help here, there.

[00:05:36 - 00:05:41]

Zachary Schrag: So would it be fair to say that that integration was the main political issue in Arlington in the mid-'50s?

[00:05:44 - 00:05:47]

Ellen Bozman: In the mid-'50s.

[00:05:47 - 00:05:52]

Zachary Schrag: I guess I'm just trying to understand, you know, put the transportation issue in context, what else was going on?

[00:05:53 - 00:07:10]

Ellen Bozman: Well, you had, transportation came later. In the '50s. You had a very divided split community lingering over from, from the end World War II until in the '60s. A very divided community, uh, community with very rapid growth during and after World War II. Um, the, the original, I'll call them traditional Arlingtonians, um, who saw all these people move into their county and the new people had all these different ideas. Most of them were government workers from all over the country.

Um, and they did have very different ideas. Arlington was, uh, Virginia communities were not in the forefront of any kind of innovation in those days. Uh, the school system was poor, uh, underfunded and underhoused so that the people who came in, um, started agitating for better schools. And that was the beginning of Arlington's civic, uh, community and well-known civic activity.

[00:07:11 - 00:07:29]

Zachary Schrag: One thing I've heard, I don't even quite remember where about the League of Women Voters was because of the Hatch Act and because there were so many federal employees in Arlington, a lot

of the men were sort of disqualified from party politics and that the League here was unusually influential. Does that sound about right?

[00:07:30 - 00:08:56]

Ellen Bozman: That could be, that could be an influence. We had local parties grow in Arlington, uh, and I think that-well the Hatch Act was one of the reasons for that. The other reason being, of course, that both the Democratic and Republican parties were-it was the Byrd machine here, and the Republicans were also very conservative, so there were all kinds of reasons for that. That's an influence, but certainly not all of it.

Zachary Schrag: And so when did you become President of the Arlington League?

Ellen Bozman: '63, from '63 to '65, and then the next year '65, '66. I was-we had just begun a-we used a different title than the used now, but it was a formation of the Metropolitan Leagues, a women voters started meeting so that we could, um, coordinate and see what everybody else was doing and we did adopt a, um, Metropolitan Plank and that was support of the Metro system.

Zachary Schrag: Okay. So let's get into that. And when did you sort of first hear about rapid transit and highway planning as well as, as important issues that you might want to get involved in?

[00:09:09 - 00:10:33]

Ellen Bozman: Well, it was really Metro that, that came to everybody's attention and it had been, um, I guess the-uh I guess a lot of us knew that there had been rapid transit planned for the area for many years. One time somebody brought a 1912 newspaper that had a headline, something like rapid transit imminent.

It took a little longer than that, but we were aware of general idea and plans for Metro, and it was coming to-Congress was approving the-and I can't tell you whether it's the funding or the adoption of the compact which set up Metro, um, right at that time because, um, during that '65-'66 year, um, I was invited to the White House for the signing of the bill because it was the Leagues all over the area for the first time, had jointly lobbied for the passage of that

bill. The timing was accidental, but it was perfect for both for us and for Metro

[00:10:33 - 00:11:52]

Zachary Schrag: So one thing that, that goes on then is, as you may remember, in 1962, the Federal Agency before the Compact, the National Capital Transportation Agency, led by Darwin Stolzenbach, put out this 89-mile plan, and here's where I get pretty shaken on the paper, as far as I can tell the first plan that this agency came up with would've had a crossing to Rosslyn, either a bridge or a tunnel, and then go straight into the median of what was then planned as Interstate 66. And someone in Arlington, and I can't figure out who said we don't want it there.

We want it underground under Wilson Boulevard and that's going to make it much more of a pedestrian friendly system. It's going to boost our existing commercial neighborhoods rather than drain resources away from them. And what I've heard from the agency side is that Arlington was the only suburban county that was paying even enough attention at this point in 1962-63, to raise such an objection. And as far as I can tell, because of that, the agency was willing to, uh, make those changes. Do you have any, I know that you were a little bit active, cause I've got some letter to the editor or something

[00:11:52 - 00:13:38]

Ellen Bozman: but-yeah no, that-' sixty-two,' sixty-three-oh no, let's see 73. That would have been Joe Fisher would have been coming on the county board, probably '63 or '64. He ran for Congress in '74 and he'd been on the Board ten years, so he probably came on, probably ran '63 or I'd have to go back and figure my dates.

I suspect-and Joe Wholey could probably answer that particular question for you. He didn't come on the board until '71, Joe Wholey and I don't know that he was active in transportation prior to that. And I can't think right offhand of other members of a '63 board who would have been alert. I do know that by, um, Joe Fisher would have been the prime mover. I feel pretty sure.

Um, and I think he was Arlington's first member on the-it couldn't have been the first member of, but he was an early member on the Metro board and an early president of the Metro board, as was Joe

Wholely, but that just sounds a little bit too early. I thought it was '68 that the system was being planned.

[00:13:39 - 00:13:59]

Zachary Schrag: Well the regional system was planned in '68, but I guess the first plan really came out in '59 and there were various modifications, and it seems that by '68 a lot of these issues have been settled as early as '62, so I'm pretty vague on it.

[00:13:59 - 00:15:27]

Ellen Bozman: Mm-hmm Well, and it may be that the change from the median of I-66 didn't come until later. That may have come in '68 to '70, which would definitely have been Joe Fisher. And what I've always heard was that it was. You look at the map of Arlington and on the one hand you want Metro to attract a lot of writers, so it will be financially stable and going median round of I-66 all the way just doesn't make much sense from that standpoint.

You look at the map and you see that the Wilson Boulevard corridor is a declining area of one and two-story buildings. The corridor is entirely zoned, commercial. It needs revitalization and what better than to wipe it out, basically with the building of Metro so that we could start over again.

Um, I know that was, uh, I know that was, uh, the philosophy that the two Joe's had, who-both Joe Fisher and Joe Wholey, but I can't help you much on the specific time. Very helpful.

[00:15:28 - 00:15:49]

Zachary Schrag: And then the other question about the early politics there is in November of 1968, the Metro funding goes up for referenda in five counties, Prince George's, Montgomery, Arlington, Alexandria, and Fairfax, if I have that right, and passes fairly easily in all of them,

Ellen Bozman: That was '68?

[00:15:49 - 00:15:49]

Zachary Schrag: Yeah. Right in the middle of the Three Sisters Bridge dispute, they say we think we've got enough support, we can pass the referenda, and they do by fairly large margins, not so much in Prince George's County but two to one margins in the other counties. And

it's just very interesting to historians, because so many other fans of systems in Atlanta, Miami, Los Angeles lost some of their suburban plans because the county opted out, so I just wonder if you have any comments or any recollections of support for Metro at the referendum stage?

[00:15:50 - 00:16:25]

Ellen Bozman: There was--there had been a lot of discussion of Metro. It was well-known of the woman who chaired the Citizens Committee for that bond issue is now living in one of our retirement homes, Goodwin House West. Elizabeth Weihe

Zachary Schrag: Don't know that name.

Ellen Bozman: No, WEIHE but it's pronounced why She was a former president of the League and had been prominent in different organizations, so she was a good person to lead it.

Uh, but it was, it was a job of, uh, convincing people that they wanted to support it and, and it wouldn't bankrupt Arlington, uh, more than it was because people knew about it. Well, at that time we were having pretty close votes on County Board elections, so it wasn't a case of, well, this--everybody here is liberal and therefore they supported it.

It was, uh, um, much closer, uh, a much a community that was pretty much middle of the road but, but didn't go to any extremes. Um, Elizabeth might be able to tell you how she reacted to that, I'm not sure.

[00:17:57 - 00:18:28]

Zachary Schrag: So the, the referendum passes and as you said, as early as I guess '67, the map was approved to have the corridor under Wilson Boulevard, but as far as I can tell, lot of the key zoning decisions were not made until a little later, '75 and '77. And at that point you were on the County Board. So if you could just tell me how you decided to run for office and something about the decisions on the zoning, I'd be very interested.

[00:18:28 - 00:19:47]

Ellen Bozman: Well, I ran for public office because, um, because I'd been on the Planning Commission by, uh, by that time I had done, uh, the volunteer jobs in the community which I thought were interesting, the League, the Health and Welfare Council, many of 100 type things. And then about, at that time, about 1970, my friend, Elizabeth Weihe who had been kind of a mentor to me all along since. Well, you had to be on the Planning Commission, so I got appointed as the Planning Commission and it was-

Zachary Schrag: who appointed you?

Ellen Bozman: The Board. The Board, but there's no-it's just always the Board. You're appointed by the County Board. You're not appointed by Member X on the County Board. Up until that time I would never-I would always have said I would never-oh no, no, no, I would never run for office and it was the experience of sitting in the same seats the County Board sits in and, uh, dealing with the public that I said oh yeah, I can handle this.

[00:19:48 - 00:22:59]

Ellen Bozman: Um, the, my-the end of the '50s and early '60s when I was doing different jobs within the Legal of Woman Voters, the community was very, very split and, and the campaigns were awful, uh,

Zachary Schrag: over what issue is, what were the splits?

Ellen Bozman: Well, it was this old split between the old Arlington and the new Arlington. And they had different ideas.

I remember one candidate saying to me, candidate for the School Board said, oh she never worried when there was garbage on the front porch because that meant they didn't have anything worse to do. It's that-you know, just-and I thought, I'd always thought, you know,

Zachary Schrag: I'm not sure I understand that comment, I'm sorry.

Ellen Bozman: Well, if somebody leaves garbage on your porch they're just-they're just doing that. They're not off doing something worse. So I needed that experience of a couple of years on the Planning Commission to, to decide that I would, and at that point did decide I'd rather have a vote than keep advising people how they ought to vote. So that's why I ran.

And I've of course always been glad I did. It was, it was good for me while I was serving on the Planning Commission. The County Board formed the long-range uh, County Improvement Committee, quite broad-based and I was a member from the Planning Commission. That was the vehicle that Joe Fisher and Joe Wholey used to do the planning for the Metro corridor.

Now it had-its biggest section was land use, its next biggest section was transportation, and then it had some social services and education, but those really dwindled off. It was a huge undertaking, some done by consultant studies, some done in staff. It was a very large, uh, community, uh, involvement process. When it got close to the end, um, we had 60 community meetings around the country, around the county. We had an all-day workshop because some people said, oh, they weren't getting enough, they wanted to know more if you did that.

So this is probably 1971 beginning or '72, and then continued until the board actually adopted it in '75, '76. But that is still the basic document that guides the. We will concentrate density in the major transportation corridors. We will have the more intense uses at the metro stations and the other, particularly for Rosslyn, not so much for the blue line.

[00:23:00 - 00:24:24]

Ellen Bozman: It was-there was an important element that the board determined they would really twist the zoning that was then in place to make sure there was mixed use at the, particularly at the Metro stations.

Because as I said earlier, the zoning, I'll call it the old zoning, which was on the Rosslyn Ballston corridor, was just really entirely commercial and we already had Rosslyn kind of built up and people, um, everyone looked at that and said, well we don't want another Rosslyn because it turned out to be so much commercial and not residential. The one high-rise zoning, at the time that Arlington had allowed you to build either in the same zoning category and the mark was strong for office, so everybody built offices, so this new zonings had to be adopted but the deliberate efforts to make it mixed use, not totally commercial, was, um, in retrospect because step for the, for the County Board to have taken..

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Zachary Schrag: Right So there were two decisions, one to make it dense, the other to make it mixed use and I guess there's almost a third decision to preserve the rest of the county, not on those Metro corridors at a much lower density, more residential.

[00:24:37 - 00:25:02]

Ellen Bozman: Yeah, because the-what the Board did really was look at this where the prior commercial zoning was, and that was pretty much your boundaries. There were-there would be a block here or there, uh, which came into the corridor as opposed to staying up, but very little. It was surprising.

[00:25:02 - 00:25:22]

Zachary Schrag: So now I have to ask you an interpretive question, which is Arlington does this, Montgomery does this, Fairfax, Prince George's not so much. Alexandria is somewhere in between. So can you sort of step back and explain why-what sort of constellation of factors made this happen in Arlington?

[00:25:22 - 00:27:09]

Ellen Bozman: Well, it was leadership by Joe Fisher and Joe Wholey primarily, who looked ahead, saw what the need was and devised a plan to - to adopt new policies with the concurrence of the citizenry. Now I have to also say I think there's a-I think this may be one place where you have a real advantage if you're a county of 25 square miles rather than a county of 400 square miles. I think in Fairfax it just wasn't on the horizon. I mean it was, it was further away.

I wasn't going to get to Fairfax for a while and, um, In Arlington I think there's a more cohesive interest just because of scale. Uh, whereas, you know, nine-tenths of Fairfax wasn't going to be affected by Metro anyway and just, it wasn't on their horizon. The other thing that helped Arlington, I think, is the, the question of timing. We did it early and so people had thought about it.

Decisions have been made before Metro ever, uh, was present. I think when you-it seems to me it's easier for people to think and, um, agree on something prior to being in the midst of the upheaval of the construction.

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Ellen Bozman: I just think people get more and more anxious, uh, and it gets harder to put in a plan that says Oh yeah, uh-huh A block away from you we're planning bigger buildings when people have an opportunity to look at a normal cooler climate, I think they are more thoughtful.

[00:27:34 - 00:28:00]

Zachary Schrag: So two questions and first of all, and now I'm realistic I really should interview Joe Wholey, but how would you-is there anything that in particular struck you about the two Joes that said, okay, this is why they might have made this a major issue, because again, when I look at Fairfax, I see very few people on the Board of Supervisors who particularly care about land use as a major concern.

[00:28:02 - 00:29:08]

Ellen Bozman: Well, you know, they're both exceedingly bright Phds and economics, or Joe's mathematics, Joe Wholey's is math. Just really outstanding individuals. And Arlington has been fortunate in having really good leadership. If you look-if you look at the metropolitan area and things that are done metropolitan wide, you often see somebody from Arlington as one of those leaders. Doesn't mean to say, you know, there are bright people everywhere.

Um, but I, I just do think that we had unusually capable people. Joe Fisher was also the President, the lay President of the International Unitary and Universe Church, you know, just really very, uh, outstanding person and both policy wonks, although we didn't always think that when you met them.

[00:29:08 - 00:29:39]

Zachary Schrag: Now going through the archives, I have come up with a lot of leaflets and petitions and so forth from Co-OPT to which I think it was either originally the County Council for Optimum Growth and later the Committee, or vice versa. [Coalition for Optimum Growth (Co-OPT)] And they really didn't like Metro or density or-very worried, anything like that. How seriously should I take those people? Was that a real threat to these plans or were they just a few smarty, noisy?

[00:29:39 - 00:32:47]

Ellen Bozman: It wasn't, um, it's a very, uh, serious-minded group. Um, and I did some work with them. In today's parlance, they would be a slow growth, not a no growth. Bringing up good questions but not. They were worried about Metro. Something went through my mind, didn't know I had lost it.

Not sure that they were against Metro so much as they were worried about it. When the county board did this long-range planning, what they did was have worked on three different scenarios, one of which was what? If we did nothing it would happen and then of course that ended you with Rosslyn commercial all the way out. What if we did a low growth, tried to buy a lot of the land, uh, have parks, huge parks, different place, Uh, and this middle alternative, what was really chosen was the middle alternative.

It wasn't high density in terms of, uh, New York or, or even Washington because I think 12 stories was the maximum at the time that plan was adopted.

So when people took a look at those three scenarios, it was-it wasn't as hard to adopt the one that said, okay, we'll confine Metro to the Metro-we'll confined densities to the Metro corridor and, um, while we continue to have some debate about the exact edge, you know, whether it's, whether it goes through the middle of the block or whether it's on the street. Uh, the basic boundaries are there and that has been a tremendous help to Arlington.

I'm not sure that it still is, because I-there have been the board. The boards have, you know, shifted around places here and there, but certainty is something that helps everybody if the neighbors have see that for the last 10, 15, 20 years of the plan, it has been adhered to that, that boundary was written and the boundary has been adhered to. It's much more comforting the developers are the same way.

[00:32:47 - 00:33:13]

Ellen Bozman: If you can tell them, you know, on this block you can do X, they're halfway home. They really-they really need that. So the-the certainty brought on by having a plan and adhering to it, uh, was very important.

[00:33:15 - 00:33:54]

Zachary Schrag: What I see in Montgomery, which has pretty good results, but there it definitely took a struggle in that. Around Forest Glen, for example, in the early '70s there would be hearings with hundreds of people showing up saying take away this station, and my sense is that it took some political courage on the part of Montgomery Board to tell those people we have to look at the interests of the county and not just go block by block. And some people may have a big parking lot where there wasn't one before to accommodate these new transportation patterns.

[00:33:55 - 00:36:02]

Ellen Bozman: Well, I think it does take political courage, uh, and I think, uh, I think the Arlington Board through those years had political courage. And we had times, my goodness, when the first building was up and clear and I thought I wasn't going to get re-elected because the precinct letter that this precinct sent out for me, my campaign, Chairman, never let me see. It was so-I guess I'd say neutral when it was supposed to be. My, you know, my precinct letter of a campaign urging people to vote for me.

People still get very upset, but it's always against that backdrop of, well, this is what in effect you have to overturn. If you're going to ask for some real change. I don't-not just the height of one building, but if you're going to say no, we don't want buildings around Virginia Square. You have to overturn all these years of history and planning, which makes it, uh, against the political leaders. Um, you know, much more. They've got something behind them. They don't have the backs of the wall.

The burden of proof has shifted. Citizens would have to show why this was impossible or highly undesirable to do.

Zachary Schrag: And would you say among those angry citizens would Co-OPT to be among the most serious opposition you had?

Ellen Bozman: Oh yes, but they didn't, um, they, by the, um, by the mid- '70s, by the late '70s they were phasing out. So it was a period of 5 - 7 years probably,

[00:36:02 - 00:36:12]

Zachary Schrag: that they were-that was my sense as well. It's just sometimes if a group puts that a lot of paper and makes sure it goes to the public library, seems bigger than it is. But this group, I think I've really understand a little better.

[00:36:13 - 00:36:47]

Ellen Bozman: Some of the movement was in place because it transferred over from the anti I-66 opposition. Many of the people were the same. Um, and they did good work, uh, so that, I think, kept them around. But it was not a huge group. This was not a group of 500. This was a group of less than 100, I'd say.

[00:36:47 - 00:37:01]

Zachary Schrag: and I would have to look this up but I think there-you mentioned Elizabeth Weihe. was there another Weihe a Ted Weihe in that relation?

[00:37:01 - 00:37:19]

Ellen Bozman: Yes he would have been in Co-OPT I think.

Zachary Schrag: Was he a son?

Ellen Bozman: A son. Ted is her son and Ted has just been appointed to the Planning Commission. Oh goodness, but he was the one who, who wanted Virginia Square to be taken off. He was advocating that that was not a position that Co-OPT really took.

[00:37:20 - 00:37:22]

Zachary Schrag: Okay. I think I hit a letter from him to the Post.

[00:37:22 - 00:37:32]

Ellen Bozman: Yeah, I think it was a smaller, a smaller group in that. But I don't think he's going to advocate for it.

[00:37:32 - 00:38:35]

Zachary Schrag: No, it doesn't want to fill it in. Interesting. Well that's another name I might want to track down. One of the, the issues about land use and you've sort of touched on this already, talking about sticking to the plan, is you put in a plan and it may take 30 years to realize. So, you know, walking here from Virginia Square, I passed a tower crane putting up something else. So. And yet it seems that some of the analyses wanted Metro to pay for itself immediately.

And so the alternatives analysis, a lot of that was done on a fairly

short time frame. What will happen 15 years from now, 30 years from now. So I just wonder if you have any comments on how one measures success of a land plan like this and or maybe on the alternatives analysis of the late '70s as well.

[00:38:43 - 00:41:57]

Ellen Bozman: I don't-I suppose different people would have different measures of success of the plan. Clearly one of the ideas behind the plan was to provide ridership for Metro to get people out of cars onto Metro and also make Metro more profitable. The assumption was people would want to live and work at the same station area. I don't think that's been borne out in any city, anywhere in this country. People who live at one Metro station may very well work at a different Metro station.

And I've even had people say to me, oh I wouldn't want to live right close to my office, you know, so everybody's different. Um, so I think in the, uh, Metro ridership, when you look at the figures for Arlington, car ownership is lower in the, uh, Metro corridors. More commuting is done by Metro. I think in all those terms you could say it's a success. Now if you said could it have been better? Uh, I don't know, it could have been.

Well, the element that is surprising everybody now is that you can't get any affordable housing in the Metro corridors. They are so popular and it's not just the corridor, it's the neighborhoods within walking distance of a station. Prices have prices everywhere in the last couple of years have just gone bananas, but even before that it's a \$ 400,000, \$500,000 house in say Lyon Village right here.

Uh, is older, smaller, more crowded lot than \$400,000 or \$500,000 out in where we live in-which is, you know, further out in Arlington the, the, um, ability to have Metro close to you is a great boom.

And I don't think that anybody foresaw the enormity of that boom and, and therefore face the question, well, what happens when prices rise to the point where the last night at, uh, Signature Theater I ran into, I had, I haven't seen him for quite a while and he said he's a lawyer with the government, with a six-figure salary, and he's just moved out of Arlington because he can't get a 1500 square foot condo, which is what he wants at a price he can afford.

So lots, of people are being-are going out of Arlington, not-it's their first choice, but it's their second.

[00:42:00 - 00:42:17]

Zachary Schrag: So I want to talk some about your two terms on the WMATA Board, '86 to '87 and '96 to '97, if I have that right. What made-how did that happen? How did you end up representing?

[00:42:17 - 00:43:34]

Ellen Bozman: Uh, Arlington has a seat permit seat on the, on the WMATA board. And, uh, we just decide among the five of us, uh, who it should be, who should go on. The first time I went on, um, we had reached the Democratic Party, had retaken the County Board, uh, and John Milliken served on Metro for the first two years and then I don't remember there was a reason he didn't want to continue serving on the Metro board so I slipped in.

Uh, then I was also, um, going to be chair of Council of Governments and it wasn't a good idea, you know, to try to do everything. Besides, we had other good people. So Mary Margaret Whipple became our representative on the Metro board, and it wasn't until she was good she enjoyed it, so that was-she just-she stayed, that was fine, but then she decided to run for the State Senate and at that point, uh, I went back on, for the last two years I was on the board.

[00:43:35 - 00:43:44]

Ellen Bozman: Then when I retired from the board, Chris Zimmerman became our member, and he's still Arlington's member. An interesting Board to work with.

[00:43:46 - 00:46:24]

Zachary Schrag: In what ways?

Ellen Bozman: Well, you're working with the interests of three different, basically, state entities and it's, there are just more differences than when you're working with, say, Alexandria and Fairfax? There are not as many commonalities.

Zachary Schrag: Do you recall any particular issues of, of either term? I mean I know, for example in the late '80s the delay on the green line was a major concern of WMATA staff. I don't know if that would've really helped the board level or not.

Ellen Bozman: Oh yes, and it was both--well there were construction delays, but then there was in Prince George's they had the problem of trying to decide the final destination and it would go back and forth between Rosecroft and something else. Um, and then there were some, about that time there were some breakthroughs on methods of constructing, cut and cover construction.

Metro, which, uh, which helped Metro a lot, I think, um, the years, the--in the '90s when I was on the board, the, uh, and '96 when I chaired the Metro board. Um, really the major issue with safety and the hiring of a new general manager. Uh, I came on, that actually took office in late January and it was early January that a train operator had been killed

Zachary Schrag: at Shady Grove.

Ellen Bozman: Is that--I think so the end of the line.

And the, so, uh, we started with a National Transportation Safety Board inquiry and, uh, then a few days later the General Manager resigned, which didn't have to do with the action. He had apparently been back and forth for several months about whether he would stay or leave, but he left, so then we needed to hire a new manager and that was--that was, um, I think we came out very well on that. I think we got a good manager. Um, I think we've got the best available, but it was--that's always an arduous process.

[00:46:26 - 00:46:39]

Zachary Schrag: And so that was probably the--I guess my question is you've got this interesting vantage point of being on the board, seeing the current issues at Metro and then coming back ten years later, and I just wonder if there were any big surprises.

[00:46:39 - 00:48:08]

Ellen Bozman: No, no big surprises, except that--well it was more than just atmosphere, but with this business of having this accident, uh, really shook things up because it causes you to look at the organization and say, you know, how come this happened, why didn't this or why didn't that, or why didn't the other. And it's, uh, that was--that was, uh, a whole added dimension that hadn't been there before, but we still had budget problems.

We still hit how many of what some people call improvements and

some people call unnecessary expenditures. Are we going to do and things take so long. The signs at Metro now that tell you there's an orange line car approaching in three minutes, that must've been 15 years in the doing, I swear, anyway. Uh, and of course more shifting from, uh, the Capital problems, like the construction along East Street or whatever, uh, to the problems of maintenance.

Yeah.

[00:48:10 - 00:48:29]

Zachary Schrag: Well, those are the main questions I have. Are there issues you think I should've asked about or other comments you want to make? It's the flavor, you see. I can track the decisions. It's a flavor of decisions, as you say, about the importance of keeping with a plan, that this is so helpful about anything like that.

[00:48:38 - 00:49:42]

Ellen Bozman: Well I'd also say that as far as the land use plan goes, it has been--there's a tension between having your plan and sticking to it and making sure that you, uh, meet today's needs. And, uh, in the mid-'80s, uh, John Milliken on the board proposed that we do what he called a mid-course correction. It was another look. It was, uh, we called in some architects from around the country and I had a charrette one weekend.

Just taking a look at the RB corridor, is it working out the way we had expected and got some good advice from them? Not earth-shaking but, um, trying to have things fit together a little better, you know, and I'm trying to think. We keep doing other looks.

[00:49:43 - 00:50:35]

Ellen Bozman: We keep redoing sector plans, the sector being the station area, the Rosslyn sector, the Courthouse sector, the Clarendon sector and there's a Clarendon sector plan going on right now. Um, and that's of course why you get, uh, at the time the plan was devised it went to, as I say, I think 12, maybe 15 story buildings and now you're looking at 18 stories or in Rosslyn, 21 story buildings. Because each time, uh, people go back and look at it they, uh, want to adjust and they want to adjust to. They see extra density which translates into the extra height as a way to achieve other things in the community.

[00:50:36 - 00:51:43]

Ellen Bozman: Parkland contribution for parkland contribution of-um for many, many years during the '70s, the '70s, the '80s and into the '90s.

The only thing you've got extra density for was affordable housing, but now you get it for public art or an energy efficient green buildings and um, that-that causes, uh, not major, but um, a difference in the-in the outlook brings about some good things, waters down the affordable housing, so it's-it what people want nowadays.

So I think you've done very well. Okay. I think you-I think I've done use probably as much flavors I have.

[00:51:47 - 00:52:32]

Zachary Schrag: I guess my last question then would be, you know, as other communities around the country think about these issues of transportation and land use planning, what might be your major pieces of advice? Just for example, one thing that a lot of people talk about, buses and how you can be more flexible and I always say, well, you don't really want flexibility. If you're a developer, you want predictability. You want to know that that big multimillion dollar station has been built in. Stay there and your building will retain its worth. But I just wonder if there are other sort of lessons to be drawn from this corridor?

[00:52:32 - 00:55:09]

Ellen Bozman: Well of course the major one that people keep talking about is the cost of this fixed rail system and how now it doesn't really serve the employment needs, because so many of them are out around the beltway. We didn't build it right with just these radial corridors. And you can always hindsight something. I don't think, uh, I don't think Metro, you know, in the '60s should be faulted for not seeing that 30 years later the pattern, employment pattern was going to be quite different, but it does say that we need to find other good transportation methods which are not fixed rail, which can accommodate, uh, the patterns that do develop. And people in this country have this great prejudice against buses. Uh, people who would ride Metro Rail that would say, oh, I'd never ride a bus. Well, why not? Well, there's, sometimes they're not as clean as the Metro Rail. Okay.

But, um, they, uh, again, predictability, I think is one factor that people-and the buses can't be as predictable unless you build your special busways, uh, and then I think they can keep on a closer headway. Um, so I think we need to keep-we need to find, uh, something which, um, takes care of things that Metro doesn't, a new city starting out, a city starting out to be able to build a new transit system should look at that very carefully. Only because Metro Rail is so expensive and, uh, they may be able to afford something that really turns out to be just about as good. Although of course the tunneling is a great advantage and the speeds that Metro Rail couldn't get up to. Also it's hard to compete for another system to compete with that too. I think that's it.

Zachary Schrag: Great. Well, thank you so much for your time and I will stop the recording now.

[End of Audio]